

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
----- 107394 /44
R 231116Z DEC 76
FM AMEMBASSY WARSAW
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5709

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 WARSAW 9128

STADIS////////////////

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PFOR, PL
SUBJECT: POLISH DISSIDENT APPEAL

REF: (A) MUNICH 3095, (B) STATE 307291, (C) WARSAW 8477,
(D) WARSAW 8844, (E) WARSAW 8658

1. SUMMARY. WE ARE SYMPATHETIC IN PRINCIPLE TO PORTIONS OF
MICHNIK'S APPEAL (REF A), BUT WE QUESTION ITS PREMISES AND
THE MAIN ONE OF ITS TWO RECOMMENDATIONS. OUR PROBLEM HAS TO
DO WITH THE REGIME'S POLICIES IN DEALING WITH CURRENT DISSENT,
THE NATURE OF THE WORKERS DEFENSE LEAGUE, AND ITS PLACE IN
THE POLISH DISSENT MOVEMENT. END SUMMARY

2. MICHNIK AND HIS COLLEAGUES SEEM TO BE ARGUING THAT GIEREK'S
CAPITULATION TO THE POPULAR MOOD LAST JUNE NEED NOT LEAD TO
HIS POLITICAL SUICIDE OR TO A SERIOUS LOSS OF FACE. WHILE WE
AGREE WITH THE FORMER, WE CANNOT AGREE THAT THE FIRST
SECRETARY HAS NOT EXPERIENCED A SERIOUS EMBARRASSMENT OR THAT
HIS STANDING WAS UNIMPAIRED AS A RESULT OF THE PRICE-RISE
FIASCO. AS OUR REPORTING HAS POINTED OUT (REF C AND D), GIEREK'S
POSITION HAS BEEN SEVERELY COMPROMISED, AND HE IS HANGING ON
TO POWER TO A LARGE EXTENT SIMPLY BECAUSE NO ALTERNATIVE LEADER
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HAS APPEARED ON THE SCENE. BY THE SAME TOKEN, THE POLICY
PRESCRIPTION HE HAS CHOSEN TO DEAL WITH HIS PLIGHT (REF E)
IS THE ONLY PRACTICABLE ONE OFFERING ANY HOPE OF RECAPTURING
SOME OF THE LIMITED POPULARITY HE ENJOYED IN THE PAST AND
PROVIDING SOME MOMENTUM TO THE COUNTRY'S ECONOMY. WHETHER
THIS POLICY WILL SUCCEED IS OPEN TO QUESTION, BUT ITS VERY

SELECTION SHOWS THAT GIEREK IS PREPARED TO GO TO CONSIDERABLE LENGTHS TO AVOID FURTHER ALIENATION OF THE POLISH POPULATION. ALSO, HIS IMMEDIATE REACTION TO THE JUNE DEMONSTRATIONS SHOULD BE SEPARATED FROM GIEREK'S SUBSEQUENT HANDLING OF THOSE ARRESTED AND THOSE WHO HAVE SINCE SPOKEN OUT AGAINST HIM. IN BOTH RESPECTS, HOWEVER, HE HAS SHOWN RESTRAINT, NOT OUT OF SYMPATHY FOR HIS OPPONENTS, BUT RATHER FROM FEAR OF FURTHER VIOLENCE. THEREFORE, WE CANNOT AGREE THAT THERE IS A "NEW SITUATION" IN POLAND, CERTAINLY NOT OF THE SORT MICHNIK AND HIS FRIENDS ARE SUGGESTING: OF STEPPED-UP REPRESSION.

3. WE ARE NOT BLIND TO EXAMPLES OF POLICE BRUTALITY AND REPRESSION, AND INDEED WE THINK THE USG AND RFE OUGHT TO DEPLORE SUCH ACTIONS AS THEY BECOME KNOWN. OUR PROBLEM IS RATHER WITH THE ASSERTION THAT THEY ARE WIDESPREAD AND THAT THEY REFLECT THE POLICY INSTRUMENT CHOSEN BY THE GIEREK LEADERSHIP TO DEAL WITH ITS OPPONENTS.

4. AS FOR THE WORKERS DEFENSE LEAGUE (WDL), IT HAS BECOME THE MOST VISIBLE OF THE VARIOUS DISSIDENT GROUPS ACTIVE IN POLAND. IT HAS CAPTURED WESTERN MEDIA ATTENTION THROUGH THE PROMINENCE OF SOME OF ITS MEMBERS AND ITS ACCESS TO THE EUROPEAN AND AMERICAN PRESS. ITS OBJECTIVES ARE LIMITED, HOWEVER, AND WERE DESIGNED INITIALLY TO OBTAIN RELEASE AND REHABILITATION OF WORKERS ARRESTED LAST JUNE AT RADOM AND IN THE URSUS TRACTOR FACTORY. THE LEAGUE HAS SINCE TAKEN ON THE TASK OF PROVIDING HELP AND DEFENSE FOR VICTIMS OF REPRESSION AND OF SPREADING NEWS OF THE ILLEGAL ACTIONS OF THE POLISH AUTHORITIES. ITS ACTIVE MEMBERSHIP INCLUDES SEVERAL PROMINENT POLES, BUT ITS NUMBERS ARE FEW, PROBABLY LESS THAN

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THIRTY. NO ONE REALLY KNOWS THE ATTITUDE TOWARD IT OF ITS ADOPTED CONSTITUENCY, THE POLISH WORKERS. ONE PROMINENT PZPR CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEMBER WHO IN THE PAST HAS SPOKEN HIS MIND FREELY HAS SAID THAT THE WDL LACKS INFLUENCE WITH THE WORKERS AND IS NOT CONSIDERED A THREAT BY THE AUTHORITIES. THIS OPINION WAS ECHOED BY A FORMER CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEMBER, WHO ADDED THAT AT BEST THE LEAGUE IS FOLLOWING WORKER OPINION RATHER THAN LEADING IT. OTHER INFORMED POLES REMIND US OF THE WARINESS WITH WHICH POLISH WORKERS AND INTELLECTUALS HAVE TRADITIONALLY EYED EACH OTHER, AND MOST QUESTION THE LIKELIHOOD OF A TRUE CONVERGENCE OF INTERESTS BETWEEN THE TWO GROUPS IN POLAND'S PRESENT PREDICAMENT. IT IS ALSO NOTEWORTHY THAT THE CHURCH, ALTHOUGH PROCLAIMING SYMPATHY FOR THE GOALS OF THE WDL, IS NEVERTHELESS KEEPING A CERTAIN DISTANCE BETWEEN ITSELF AND THE ORGANIZATION.

5. IN SHORT, WE SEE THE WDL AS AN IMPORTANT BUT NOT NECESSARILY THE DOMINANT DISSIDENT GROUP IN POLAND. ITS

EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE JUSTICE FOR THOSE VICTIMIZED BY THE
REGIME AND TO NUDGE THE AUTHORITIES TOWARD A MORE LIBERAL
AND HUMANE SYSTEM ARE TO BE APPLAUDED. BUT IT IS ONE OF A
NUMBER OF GROUPS AROUND WHICH WIDESPREAD UNHAPPINESS IS COAL-
ESCING, AND ITS MEMBERS HAVE NOT BEEN HASSLED ANY MORE THAN
OTHER DISSIDENTS. MORE IMPORTANTLY, AS STATED ABOVE, WE DO NOT
AGREE THAT THE REGIME HAS EMBARKED ON A DELIBERATE POLICY OF
REPRESSION AGAINST DISSIDENTS. THE VERY OPENNESS WITH
WHICH OPPOSITION IS EXPRESSED IN TODAY'S POLAND IS INDICATIVE
OF THIS. THE AUTHORITIES COULD DECIDE TO CLAMP DOWN ONCE
AND FOR ALL, BUT SO FAR THEY HAVE NOT.

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 WARSAW 9128

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EXDIS

6. TURNING TO THE SPECIFICS OF MICHNIK'S APPEAL, WE SEE NO
PROBLEM WITH INCLUDING SOME COMMITTEE MEMBERS IN EMBASSY
SOCIAL FUNCTIONS. WE HAVE DONE THIS IN THE PAST AND WILL
DO SO IN THE FUTURE. IF "GESTURES" ARE SOUGHT, MICHNIK MIGHT
BE REMINDED OF OUR WILLINGNESS TO FINANCE THE RECENT TRIP
TO THE US OF PROFESSOR EDWARD LIPINSKI. IN ADDITION, IVP
GRANTS ARE NOW IN THE WORKS FOR RUDOLPH BUCHALA AND JANUSZ
ZABLOCKI, BOTH PROMIENT MEMBERS OF OTHER DISSIDENT GROUPS.
WE ARE ALSO RECOMMENDING GRANTS TO WELL-KNOWN DISSIDENTS
HENRYK KRZECZLOWSKI, TADEUSZ MAZOWIECKI AND WLADYSLAW
BAROSZEWSKI.

7. WHAT WE ARE PARTICULARLY CHARY OF IS MICHNIK'S SUGGESTION
THAT WE CONTRIVE AN EXPRESSION OF OFFICIAL USG "INTEREST"
IN POLAND'S DOMESIC SITUATION. OBVIOUSLY WE ARE INTERESTED,
AND WE WOULD HAVE NO TROUBLE WITH SUCH AN EXPRESSION IF IT
WERE APPLIED TO THE GENERAL SCENE HERE, OR TO THE PROBLEM

OF REPRESSION IN THE USSR AND EASTERN EUROPE AS A WHOLE.
BUT AN INDICATION OF "INTEREST" IMPLYING THAT WE THINK THAT
GIEREK AND COMPANY HAVE ADOPTED REPRESSION AND BRUTALITY AS
PRIMARY MEASURES FOR DEALING WITH DISSIDENCE SIMPLY DOES
NOT SQUARE WITH THE FACTS AS WE SEE THEM.

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8. THE TRUTH IS THAT THE REGIME DOES NOT KNOW WHAT TO DO
ABOUT ITS LOW STANDING IN THE POLISH PUBLIC'S ESTEEM. IT TOOK
ALMOST SIX MONTHS OF FLOUNDERING TO DECIDE ON A STRATEGY TO
DEAL WITH ITS PRICE SNAFU OF LAST SUMMER, AND THERE IS MUCH
EVIDENCE THAT THE SAME UNCERTAINTIES ARE AT WORK RIGHT NOW
ON THE DISSIDENT QUESTION. WHILE THIS PROCESS GOES ON, WE
RECOMMEND AGAINST SENDING SIGNALS TO THE WDL. THEY COULD
BE COUNTERPRODUCTIVE BY ENCOURAGING THOSE IN THE LEADER-
SHIP LOOKING FOR "PERNICIOUS WESTERN MEDDLING" IN THIS TIME
OF UNCERTAINTY AS AN EXCUSE TO TIGHTEN THE SCREWS.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL REPRESSION, FOREIGN RELATIONS, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, DISSIDENT FACTIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 23 DEC 1976
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: BoyleJA
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976WARSAW09128
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760471-0235
From: WARSAW
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19761215/aaaaampy.tel
Line Count: 192
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS, STADIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS, STADIS
Reference: 77 MUNICH 3095, 77 STATE 307291, 77 WARSAW 8477, 77 WARSAW 8844, 77 WARSAW 8658
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: BoyleJA
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 28 APR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <28 APR 2004 by MartinML>; APPROVED <19 AUG 2004 by BoyleJA>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: POLISH DISSIDENT APPEAL
TAGS: PINT, PFOR, PL
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006